

GARDEN SPOT VILLAGE EMBRACES PARTNERSHIP HOME PROGRAM

Retirement community to help build home for Louisiana family in need

NEW HOLLAND, Pa. —Aug. 31, 2010 — Wall panels built in a retirement community parking lot will eventually shelter a family of five who lost their home in the aftermath of two Gulf Coast hurricanes. Garden Spot Village and Petra Christian Fellowship are working together to build the home as part of the Partnership Home Program of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS).

Volunteers from Garden Spot Village and Petra Christian Fellowship will gather in the retirement community's Pavilion parking lot on Sat., Sept. 25, and build wall partitions in 14-foot lengths, with cut-outs for doors and windows. The finished panels will be trucked to a community near New Iberia, La., where volunteer teams will complete the home— a 1,050-square-foot raised ranch with three bedrooms and two bathrooms—on site. The home is for a family with three children.

“We’re going to get them in the house for Christmas,” said Charlie Till, a Garden Spot Village resident who is coordinating the project at the retirement community. Till and his wife, Lee, have volunteered with MDS for a decade. One day last fall, Till was wearing an MDS T-shirt when Chet Yoder, director of pastoral care, approached him about the Partnership Home Program. Till immediately agreed to get involved. Yoder later approached Petra Christian Fellowship about participating together.

The recipient family was living in mobile home that was flooded when Hurricane Rita hit the Gulf in 2005. They had just moved back in when Hurricane Ike struck in 2008 and wiped out their home. Guy and Regina are both in their 40s, and both are disabled. Two of their children attend college on athletic and academic scholarships. Their youngest daughter hopes to follow in her sister's footsteps.

Residents who aren't able to come out to hammer nails will be able to participate in a unique way. Before the panels are built, residents will have opportunities to write messages or Bible verses or sign their names on the building materials. In addition, Till and another member of the Garden Spot Village woodshop built stanchions to support two-by-fours for residents who can't bend over to hammer nails but who want to take part in a symbolic way.

“At this point, most people don't want to swing a 22-ounce hammer for a long time. We're trying to accommodate everybody,” said Till.

Typically, a sponsoring church provides materials, labor and funds needed to build. In this case, Garden Spot Village and Petra Christian Fellowship are sharing the load. Petra is providing most of the labor. Rich Esh, of Petra, is managing the project. Garden Spot Village is raising funds to support the volunteer crews on site, including transportation, lodging and meals.

Donations toward project expenses are welcome. Checks should be made payable to Garden Spot Village and designated for the Partnership Home Program. Send donations to Garden Spot Village Partnership Home Program, 433 S. Kinzer Ave., New Holland, Pa., 17557.

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